

It's a Wonderful World !

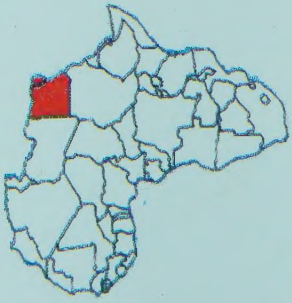






Thank you, Mr. C. Somashekar for  
lending wings to our dreams and  
for inspiring us to fly even higher





# The Pyramids at Giza

## Egypt



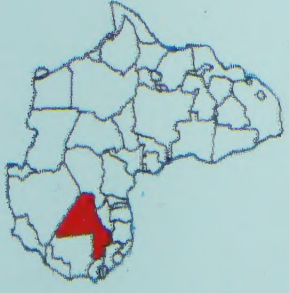
- Built between 2600 and 2500 B.C., the three pyramids at Giza are the oldest and only remaining member of the Seven Wonders of the World.
- These pyramids are made of more than 5 million limestone blocks. These blocks were painstakingly transported via timber sleds and by being rolled over the top of logs. As cranes did not yet exist, each block had to be dragged on ramps up to its designated place.
- The Great Pyramid of Giza, built as a tomb for the Egyptian pharaoh Khufu, is the oldest and the largest of the three pyramids. The other two pyramids are the slightly smaller Pyramid of Khafre (or Chephren) and the more modest-sized Pyramid of Menkaure (or Mykerinus).
- Of the three pyramids, only the Pyramid of Khafre still shows off part of its original polished limestone coating, up near the top of the structure. It is interesting to see that this middle pyramid appears to be bigger than the Great Pyramid because it is on a slight hill, and because the angle of inclination is steeper.
- Within the pyramid complex, there are also a number of smaller satellite buildings in the ancient Egyptian necropolis ("city of the dead"), called "queen's" pyramids, causeways and valley pyramids, as well as the Great Sphinx.
- The pyramids represented the link between heaven and earth and were directed at Horus, who was the ancient Egyptian god of the world.





The Pyramids at Giza, Egypt





# Timbuktu, Mali



- Timbuktu is a city in Tombouctou Region, Mali. The place name is said to come from a Tuareg woman named Buktu who dug a well in the area where the city stands today; hence "Timbuktu", which means "Buktu's well".
- The name of this city in the West African country of Mali is so wrapped in legend that many people think of Timbuktu as a mythical, timeless land rather than a city with a real history.
- For West Africans, however, Timbuktu was an economic and cultural capital and beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Timbuktu became the center of a thriving trade in Africa.
- During the early 15th century, a number of Islamic institutions were erected. Its three great mosques, Djingareyber, Sankore and Sidi Yahya, recall Timbuktu's golden age. The most famous of these is the Sankore mosque, also known as the University of Sankore. The collection of ancient manuscripts at the University of Sankore and other sites around Timbuktu document the magnificence of the institution, as well as the city itself. A West African Islamic proverb states that "Salt comes from the north, gold from the south, but the word of God and the treasures of wisdom come from Timbuktu."
- Currently, the city is threatened by desertification where the drifting sands of the Sahara Desert has destroyed the vegetation, water supply, and many historical structures in the city. Timbuktu was inscribed on the World Heritage List in Danger in 1990 and UNESCO established a conservation program to safeguard the city





**Timbuktu, Mali**





# Chichén Itzá, Yucatán Peninsula, Mexico



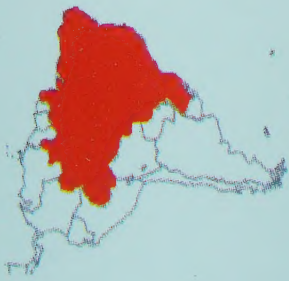
- ❑ The famous Mayan pyramids of Chichen-Itza are over 1500 years old
- ❑ The name Chichen-Itza is a Mayan word: CHI (mouth) CHEN (well) and ITZA (of the Itza tribe).
- ❑ Chichen Itza was a center of pilgrimage for the ancient Maya for over 1,000 years.
- ❑ As the northern Yucatán has no above-ground rivers, the fact that three natural sink holes (cenotes) providing plentiful water year round at Chichen made it attractive for settlement. The Sacred Cenote (a large natural well or limestone sink hole) was holy to the ancient Rain God "Chac".
- ❑ Its various structures - the pyramid of Kukulkan, the Temple of Chac Mool, the Hall of the Thousand Pillars, and the Playing Field of the Prisoners – can still be seen today





Chichén Itzá, Yucatán Peninsula, Mexico





# Christ Redeemer,

## Rio de Janeiro, Brazil



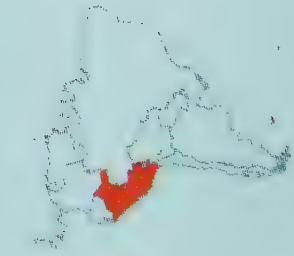
- Christ the Redeemer is a large statue of Jesus Christ in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The statue stands 32 m (125 feet) tall, weighs 1000 tons and is located at the peak of the 710-m (2330-foot) Corcovado mountain in the Tijuca Forest National Park, overlooking the city
- Designed by the local engineer Heitor da Silva Costa and created by French sculptor Paul Landowski, Christ Redeemer is one of the world's best-known monuments. .
- The statue, which took five years to build, is made out of reinforced concrete, with the outer layers made from soapstone because of this stone being easy to work with and resistant to extreme weather.
- The monument was inaugurated on October 12, 1931, by president Getúlio Vargas in a large, lavish ceremony.
- On January 20, 2003, technology brought another change to the monument—panoramic elevators and escalators were inaugurated, so it is no longer necessary to climb up 220 steps to see the statue up close.





Christ Redeemer, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil





# Machu Picchu,

## Peru



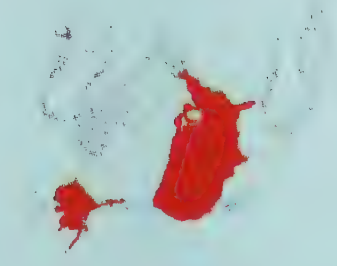
- ❑ Machu Picchu is a pre-Columbian city created by the Inca. It is located at 2,430 m on a mountain ridge; located above the Urubamba Valley in Peru.
- ❑ Forgotten for centuries by the outside world, although not by locals, it was brought back to international attention by archaeologist Hiram Bingham who rediscovered it in 1911
- ❑ It was probably the most amazing urban creation of the Inca Empire at its height; its giant walls, terraces and ramps seem as if they have been cut naturally in the continuous rock escarpments.
- ❑ An estimate 1.200 people could live in Machu Picchu. There is a religious, a military and a residential area divided by a majestic square.
- ❑ There are several different theories as to what Machu Picchu was. Some believe it was the luxurious mausoleum (burial site) of Pachacútec, since there are remains of buildings that were covered with gold. Others think that it was an Incan "llacta," a settlement built to both control the economy of the conquered regions and to protect the top Incan aristocracy in the case of an attack. Another theory expands on this idea, seeing Machu Picchu as a country retreat for Inca nobility. It may also have been used as an observatory and for astrological ceremonies.





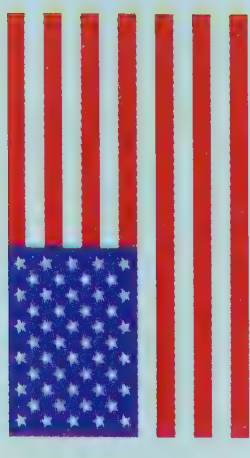
Machu Picchu, Peru





# The Statue of Liberty,

## New York City, U.S.A



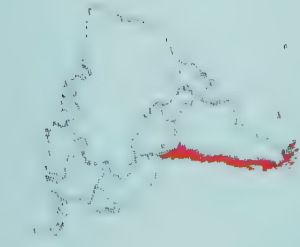
- ❑ Liberty Enlightening the World, known more commonly as the Statue of Liberty, was presented to the United States by France in 1886. Standing at Liberty Island, New York in the mouth of the Hudson River in New York Harbor, the statue welcomes all visitors, immigrants, and returning Americans.
- ❑ The statue shows a woman standing upright, dressed in a robe and a seven point spiked crown representing the seven seas and continents. She holds a stone tablet close to her body in her left hand and a flaming torch high in her right hand. The tablet in her hand shows the date of the nation's birth (July 4, 1776). The broken shackles lying at Lady Liberty's feet signify liberation from oppression and tyranny
- ❑ The sculptor was Frederic Auguste Bartholdi and Gustave Eiffel, the designer of the Eiffel Tower, engineered the internal supporting structure.
- ❑ The statue is made of a sheeting of pure copper, hung on a framework of steel (originally puddled iron) with the exception of the flame of the torch, which is coated in gold leaf.
- ❑ A new torch replaced the original, which was deemed beyond repair because of the extensive 1916 modifications. The 1886 torch is now located in the monument's lobby museum. The new torch has gold plating applied to the exterior of the "flame," which is illuminated by external lamps on the surrounding balcony platform.





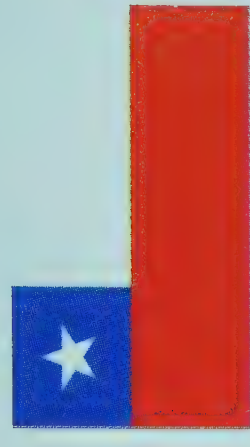
The Statue of Liberty, New York City, U.S.A.





# Easter Island,

## Chile



- Easter Island is over 2,000 miles from the nearest population center, (Tahiti and Chile), making it one of the most isolated places on Earth. In 1722, a Dutch explorer, Jacob Roggeveen, sighted and visited the island. This happened to be on Easter Sunday, and the name stuck: Easter Island
- The island is famous for its numerous **moai** (pronounced moe-eye), the stone statues located along the coastlines
- Moai are statues carved from compressed volcanic ash on Rapa Nui, Easter Island, Chile. The statues are all monolithic, that is, carved in one piece.
- Although usually identified as "heads" only, the moai are actually heads and truncated torsos.
- The largest moai erected, "Paro", was almost 10 metres (33 feet) high and weighed 75 tonnes
- In recent years, toppled moai have been found untouched and face-down. This led to the discovery that the famous deep eye sockets of the moai were designed to hold coral eyes.
- Only a quarter of the statues ever made it to the coastal *ahu* platforms, with nearly half still remaining in Rano Raraku and the rest elsewhere on the island, probably on their ways to final locations.



# Easter Island, Chile







# Sydney Opera House, Sydney, Australia



- ❑ Sydney Opera House is one of the most distinctive and famous 20th-century buildings, and one of the most famous performing arts venues in the world.
- ❑ Situated on Bennelong Point in Sydney Harbour, with parkland to its south and close to the huge Sydney Harbour Bridge, the building and its surroundings have come to be an icon of Australia.
- ❑ As well as many touring theatre, ballet, and musical productions, the Opera House is the home of Opera Australia, the Sydney Theatre Company and the Sydney Symphony.
- ❑ To some, the sail-shaped, sectioned shells seem to show the many sailboats usually seen in the harbor.
- ❑ Sydney Opera House has some 1,000 rooms, including five theaters, five rehearsal studios, two main halls, four restaurants, six bars and several souvenir shops.

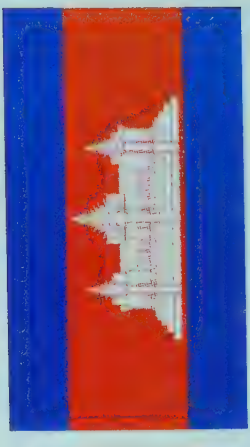
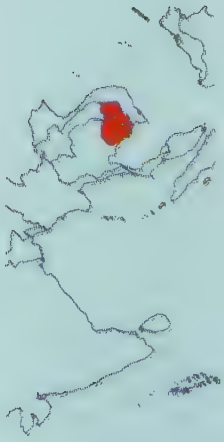




Sydney Opera House, Sydney, Australia



# Angkor, Cambodia



- Angkor Wat (or Angkor Vat) is a temple at Angkor, Cambodia, built for King Suryavarman II in the early 12th century as his state temple and capital city.
- The largest and best-preserved temple at the site, it is the only one to have remained since its foundation a significant religious centre — first Hindu, dedicated to Vishnu, then Buddhist.
- Angkor Wat combines two basic plans of Khmer temple architecture: the temple mountain and the later galleried temples. It is designed to represent Mount Meru, home of the gods in Hindu mythology:
- The temple has become a symbol of Cambodia, and is a source of great national pride. A depiction of Angkor Wat has been a part of every Cambodian national flag since the introduction of the first version circa 1863—the only building to appear on any national flag.





Angkor, Cambodia



# The Great Wall of China

## China



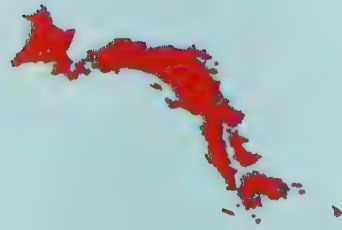
- ❑ The Great Wall is one of the existing mega-structures and the world's longest human-made structure. Like a huge dragon, the Great Wall winds across plateaus, deserts, grasslands and mountains, stretching approximately 6,400 km from East to West.
- ❑ The Great Wall was built as a defensive fortification against invading nomadic Mongol tribes by three states: Yan, Zhao and Qin. The Great Wall went through constant extensions and repairs in later dynasties. Construction on the first section began between the 7th and 6th century BC, and the last work on the wall was done between the 14th and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. In fact, it began as independent walls for different states when it was first built, and did not become the "Great" wall until the Qin Dynasty.
- ❑ Before the use of bricks, the Great Wall was mainly built from earth, stones, and wood. During the Ming Dynasty, however, bricks were heavily used in many areas of the wall, as were materials such as tiles, lime, and stone. The size and weight of the bricks made them easier to work with than earth and stone, so construction quickened.
- ❑ The wall also has watch towers at regular intervals, which were used to store weapons, house troops, and send smoke signals. Barracks and administrative centers are located at larger intervals





The,Great Wall of China





# Kiyomizu Temple,

## Kyoto, Japan



- ❑ **Kiyomizu-dera** refers to several Buddhist temples but most commonly to *Otowa-san Kiyomizu-dera* in Eastern Kyoto, one of the best known sights of the city.
- ❑ The temple takes its name from the waterfall within the complex, which runs off the nearby hills. *Kiyomizu* literally means *pure water* or *limpid water*.
- ❑ The main hall of Kiyomizu-dera is notable for its vast veranda, supported by hundreds of pillars, that juts out over the hillside. The expression "to jump off the stage at Kiyomizu" refers to an Edo period tradition that held that, if one were to survive jumping from the stage, one's wish would be granted. The lush vegetation below the platform might help the person survive, but the practice is now prohibited.
- ❑ Beneath the main hall is the waterfall *Otowa-no-taki*, where three channels of water drop into a pond. Visitors to the temple collect the water, and it is said that drinking the water of the three streams confers health, longevity, and success in studies.
- ❑ The temple complex contains several other shrines, notably *Jishu-jinja*, dedicated to *Okuninushino-Mikoto*, a god of love and "good matches". *Jishu-jinja* possesses a pair of "love stones" placed 18 meters apart, which lonely visitors attempt to walk between with their eyes closed. Success in reaching the other stone, eyes closed, is taken as a presage that the pilgrim will find love.





Kiyomizu Temple, Kyoto, Japan





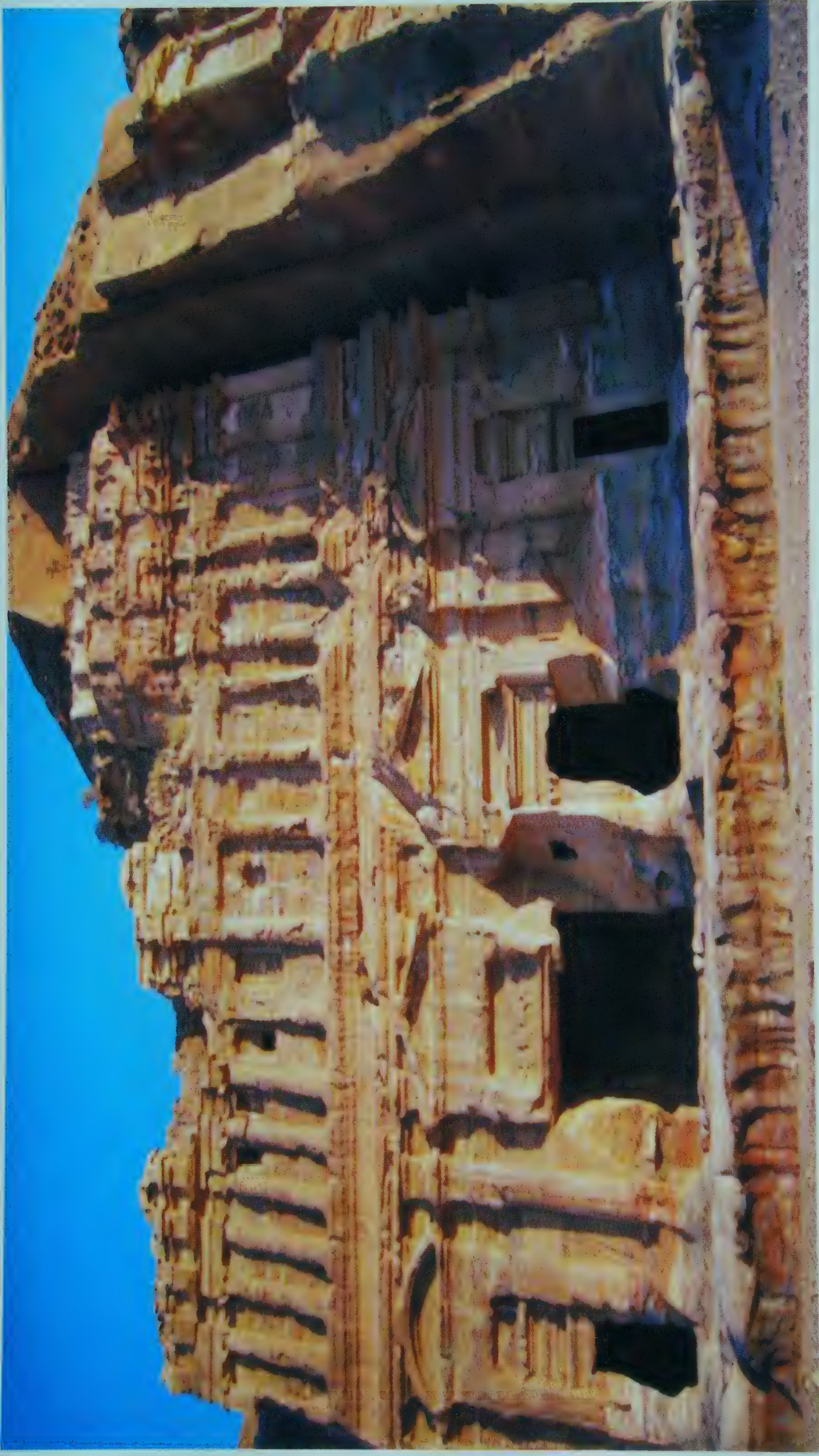
# Petra,

## Jordan



- Petra (from "petra" meaning rock in Greek) is an archaeological site in Jordan, lying in a basin among the mountains which form the eastern flank of Arabah (Wadi Arabah), the large valley running from the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Aqaba.
- 2000 years ago it was the capital of the Nabataean Kingdom, with ports in Aila (Aqaba) and Gaza. Due to easy access, Petra became the meeting point of the ancient trade routes, and the Nabataeans gained great wealth, expressed by their unique architecture, gardens and waterfalls.
- Petra is famous for having many stone structures carved into the rock. The long-hidden site was revealed to the Western world by the Swiss explorer Johann Ludwig Burckhardt in 1812.
- John William Burgon famously wrote that Petra was a "rose red city half as old as time." Although at that time Burgon had never been to Petra himself, the phrase has become strongly associated with Petra. In fact the rocks of Petra are of many hues, few of which could properly be described as "rose red".



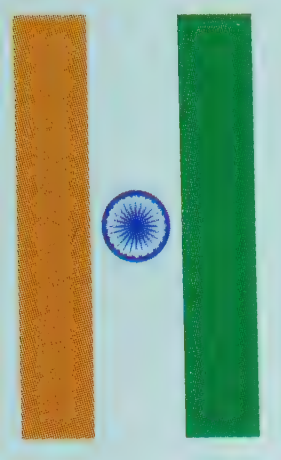


Petra, Jordan





# The Taj Mahal, Agra, India



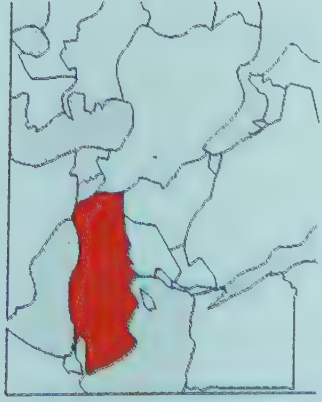
- The Taj Mahal is a mausoleum located in Agra, India. The Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan commissioned it as a mausoleum for his favorite wife, Mumtaz Mahal.
- The Taj Mahal (sometimes called "the Taj") is generally considered the finest example of Mughal architecture, a style that combines elements of Persian, Turkish, Indian, and Islamic architectural styles.
- The Taj Mahal was constructed using materials from all over India and Asia. Over 1,000 elephants were used to transport building materials during the construction. The translucent white marble was brought from Rajasthan, the jasper from Punjab, jade and crystal from China. The turquoise was from Tibet and the Lapis lazuli from Afghanistan, while the sapphire came from Sri Lanka and the carnelian from Arabia. In all, twenty-eight types of precious and semi-precious stones were inlaid into the white marble.
- Soon after the Taj Mahal's completion, Shah Jahan was deposed and put under house arrest at nearby Agra Fort by his son Aurangzeb. Legend has it that he spent the remainder of his days gazing through the window at the Taj Mahal. Upon Shah Jahan's death, Aurangzeb buried him in the Taj Mahal next to his wife, the only disruption of the otherwise perfect symmetry in the architecture.





The Taj Mahal, Agra, India





# The Hagia Sophia, Istanbul, Turkey



- ❑ **Hagia Sophia** is situated at the Sultanahmet Square and is one of the most important historical places in Istanbul.
- ❑ The name comes from the Greek name meaning "Church of the Holy Wisdom of God". Although it is sometimes called "Saint Sophia" in English, or similar terms in other languages, it is *not* named after any saint named Sophia — the Greek word *sophia* means "wisdom."
- ❑ For over 900 years Hagia Sophia has been used as a church where the Orthodox Patriarch was seated. After the conquest of Istanbul in the year 1453 Hagia Sophia was converted into a mosque and the mosaics inside the building were covered to meet the requirements of the Islam Religion.
- ❑ Hagia Sophia which was converted into a museum by Mustafa Kemal in the year 1934 has been taken under protection by UNESCO in the year 1993.
- ❑ Trivia: Hagia Sophia is featured in the 1963 James Bond film *From Russia With Love* where Bond's lover Tatiana Romanova slips Bond small blueprints of Istanbul's Russian consulate where Bond needs to steal the Lektor communication device. The Hagia Sophia is also seen in background shots in the 1999 James Bond film *The World Is Not Enough*.



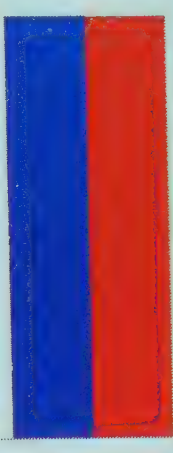
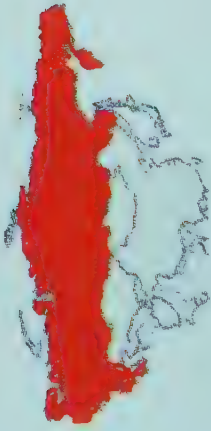


The Hagia Sophia, Istanbul, Turkey



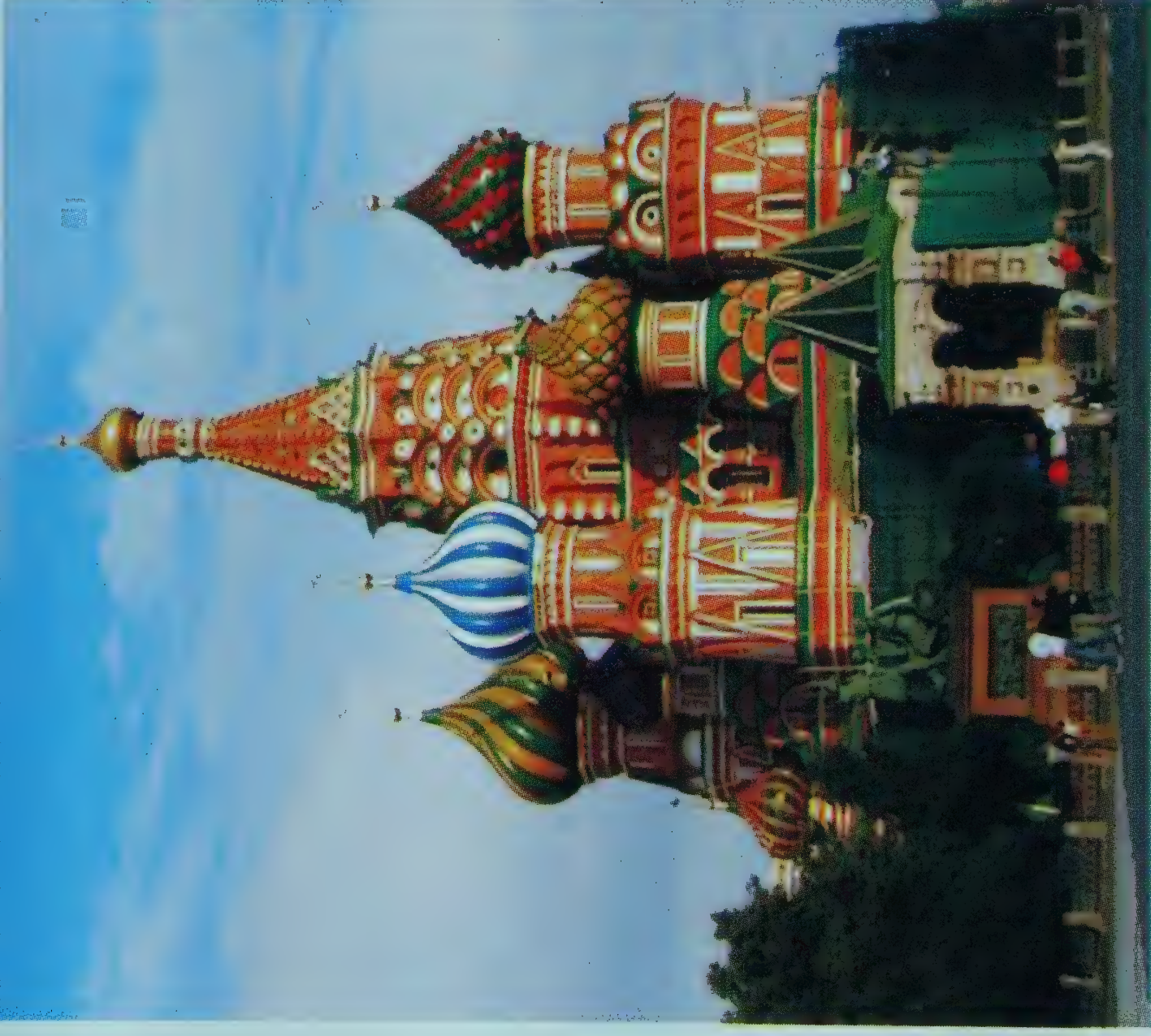
# The Kremlin & St. Basil's Cathedral,

## Moscow, Russia



- The Kremlin has a long history, first built in 1156 as a residence for Ivan I. The Kremlin remained the official residence of the czars until the 1917 Russian Revolution. The Kremlin remains a unique monument of Russian culture and a symbol of Russian statehood
- In front of the Kremlin is the Red Square; rising from the southeast end of the square, across from the Kremlin's Spasskaya Tower, is the Cathedral of Intercession on the Mound (better known as the Cathedral of St. Basil the Blessed, or simply St. Basil's Cathedral
- St. Basil's is a delightful array of swirling colors and redbrick towers. Its design comprises nine individual chapels, each topped with a unique onion dome
- The Cathedral was commissioned by Ivan the Terrible and built between 1555 and 1561. Legend has it that on completion of the church the Tsar ordered the architect, Postnik Yakovlev, to be blinded to prevent him from ever creating anything to rival its beauty again. (He did in fact go on to build another cathedral in Vladimir despite his ocular impediment!)
- Legend has it that Napoleon was so impressed with St. Basil's that he wanted to take it back to Paris with him, but lacking to the technology to do so, ordered instead that it be destroyed with the French retreat from the city. The French set up kegs of gunpowder and lit their fuses, but a sudden, miraculous shower helped to extinguish the fuses and prevent the explosion.





**The Kremlin and St. Basil's Cathedral, Moscow, Russia**





# The Acropolis of Athens, Athens, Greece



□ This large acropolis (which means “high city” in Greek) was built on top of what is known as the “Sacred Rock” of Athens, and it was supposed to radiate power and protection for its citizens.

□ The entrance to the Acropolis was a monumental gateway called the Propylaea. To the south of the entrance is the tiny Temple of Athena Nike. A bronze statue of Athena, originally stood at its center. At the centre of the Acropolis is the Parthenon or Temple of Athena Parthenos (Athena the Virgin). East of the entrance and north of the Parthenon is the temple known as the Erechtheum. South of the platform that forms the top of the Acropolis there are the remains of an outdoor theatre called Theatre of Dionysus. A few hundred metres away, there is the, now partially reconstructed Theatre of Herodes Atticus.

□ Much of the original Acropolis, including the Older Parthenon, was destroyed by the invading Persians in 480 B.C. Once the Persian Wars were over, the Athenians fixed the sacred place up, first ceremonially burying objects of worship and art that could not be used any more—this group of articles is the richest archaeological treasure found on the Acropolis, having been protected from further destruction through the ages by the rebuilding of the temples on top of it.

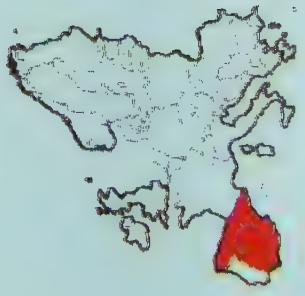
□ Today, the Parthenon in particular is an international symbol of Greek civilization. A graphic illustration of the temple also appears in the UNESCO logo, representing culture and education.





**The Acropolis of Athens, Athens, Greece**





# The Alhambra, Granada, Spain



- The Alhambra (Red Castle) is an ancient palace and fortress complex in Granada, in southern Spain. The name derives from the colour of the red clay of the surroundings of which the fort is made
- The complex, which covers an area of 13 hectares, is renowned for its stunning frescoes and interior detail and is one of the best examples of Moorish architecture
- The majority of the palace buildings are quadrangular, with all the rooms opening on to a central court. Everywhere, the exterior is left plain, while the inside of the palace is full of exquisite details on its marble pillars & arches, its ceilings with repetitive, geometrical bands and painted tiles on the walls.
- The wind blows through the rooms and sunshine streams in—the whole effect is one of very airy lightness and grace. Blue, red, and a golden yellow, all now a little faded from time and exposure, are the colors used most.
- Throughout the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries, the fortress became a citadel with high walls and defensive towers, which enclose two main areas: 1) the military area or citadel, called the alcazaba, which contain the barracks of the royal guard and is built on an isolated piece of high land, and 2) the medina or court city, with the famous Nasrid Palaces and the remains of the houses of noblemen and other citizens who lived there





The Alhambra, Granada, Spain





# Neuschwanstein Castle,

## Füssen, Germany



Neuschwanstein Castle is a 19th century Bavarian castle. Located in Germany, near Hohenschwangau and Füssen in southwest Bavaria, the castle was built by Ludwig II, King of Bavaria, as a retreat and as a homage to Richard Wagner, the King's inspiring muse.

It was built in a time when castles and fortresses were no longer strategically necessary. Instead, it was born of pure fantasy—a beautiful structure of towers and walls in the perfect setting of mountains and lakes.

This is “Mad” King Ludwig II of Bavaria's most famous castle, which inspired the Sleeping Beauty Castle in Disneyland in California, USA.

The castle sits high at the top of a hill. A steep, narrow road leads to the front gate. The towers in the outside walls of the castle contain circular stairways. With over 360 rooms, it took 17 years to build.

Neuschwanstein Castle was named after the Swan Knight, Lohengrin, who is an important figure in German medieval mythology and the hero of an opera by the German composer Richard Wagner.

Because of Ludwig's eccentricities, and because he was believed to be wasting huge amounts of the Bavarian state's money on buildings and the arts (although Ludwig used his own money for Neuschwanstein), Ludwig was removed from power before the castle was completed.

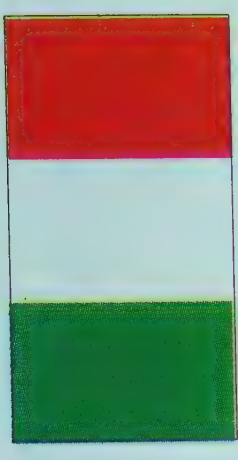




Neuschwanstein Castle, Füssen, Germany



# Colosseum, Rome, Italy



- The Colosseum or Coliseum, the largest ever built in the Roman Empire, was completed in 80 AD under Titus, with further modifications being made during Domitian's reign
- The Colosseum was built to hold approximately 50,000 spectators and had a total of 80 entrances. It was used for gladiatorial contests and public spectacles.
- Seating was divided into sections: the podium, or 1<sup>st</sup> level, was for the Emperor's cushioned box and Roman senators. Above this was the area for other Roman aristocrats. At the third level, the lower part was for wealthy citizens and an upper part for poor ones. A wooden area at the very top of the building was standing room only, for lower-class women.
- Today the walls and corridors are still visible in the ruins. There are also tunnels, still in existence, made to flood and evacuate water from the Colosseum floor so naval battles could be staged. Another innovative feature of was the cooling system, known as the velarium: a canvas-covered, net-like structure made of ropes, with a hole in the center. This roof covered two-thirds of the arena and sloped down toward the center to catch the wind and provide a breeze for the audience.
- The Colosseum suffered many disasters including a lightning strike which put the Colosseum out of action for 21 years. Two earthquakes in 442 and 508 damaged to main structure forcing it to shut down for good in 524
- The design concept of this great amphitheater in the center of Rome is still relevant, having influenced almost every modern sports stadium.



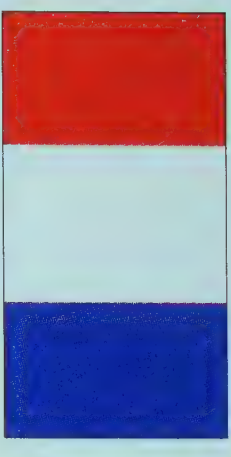


Colosseum, Rome, Italy



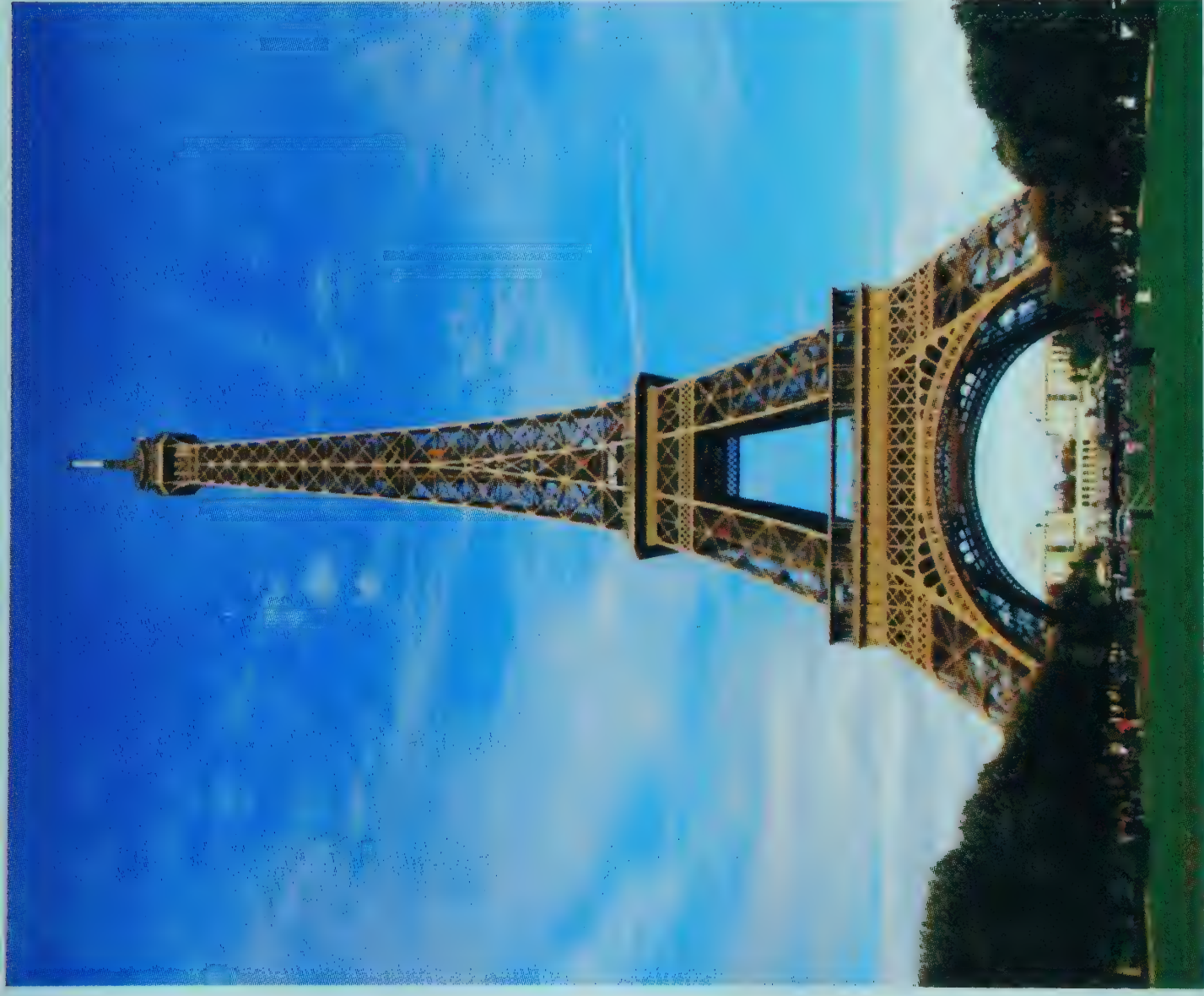


# The Eiffel Tower, Paris, France



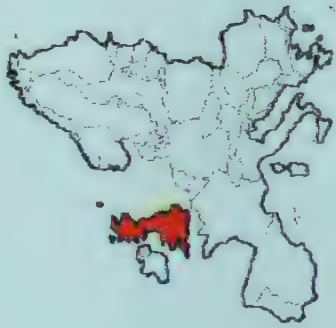
- The Eiffel Tower is an iron tower built on the Champ de Mars beside the River Seine in Paris, France.
- It is the tallest structure in Paris and one of the most recognized monuments in the world. Named after its designer, engineer Gustave Eiffel, it is the most visited monument in the world
- Depending on the ambient temperature, the top of the tower may shift away from the sun by up to 18 cm (7 in), due to thermal expansion of the metal on the side facing the sun. The tower also sways 6-7 cm (2-3 in) in the wind
- The tower is actually painted three different colors in order to make it look the same color. The colors change from dark to light from top to bottom, but it looks the same because of the background (the sky being light and the ground being dark).
- In 1930, the tower lost the title of the world's tallest structure when the Chrysler Building was completed in New York City.





The Eiffel Tower, Paris, France





# Stonehenge,

## Amesbury, United Kingdom



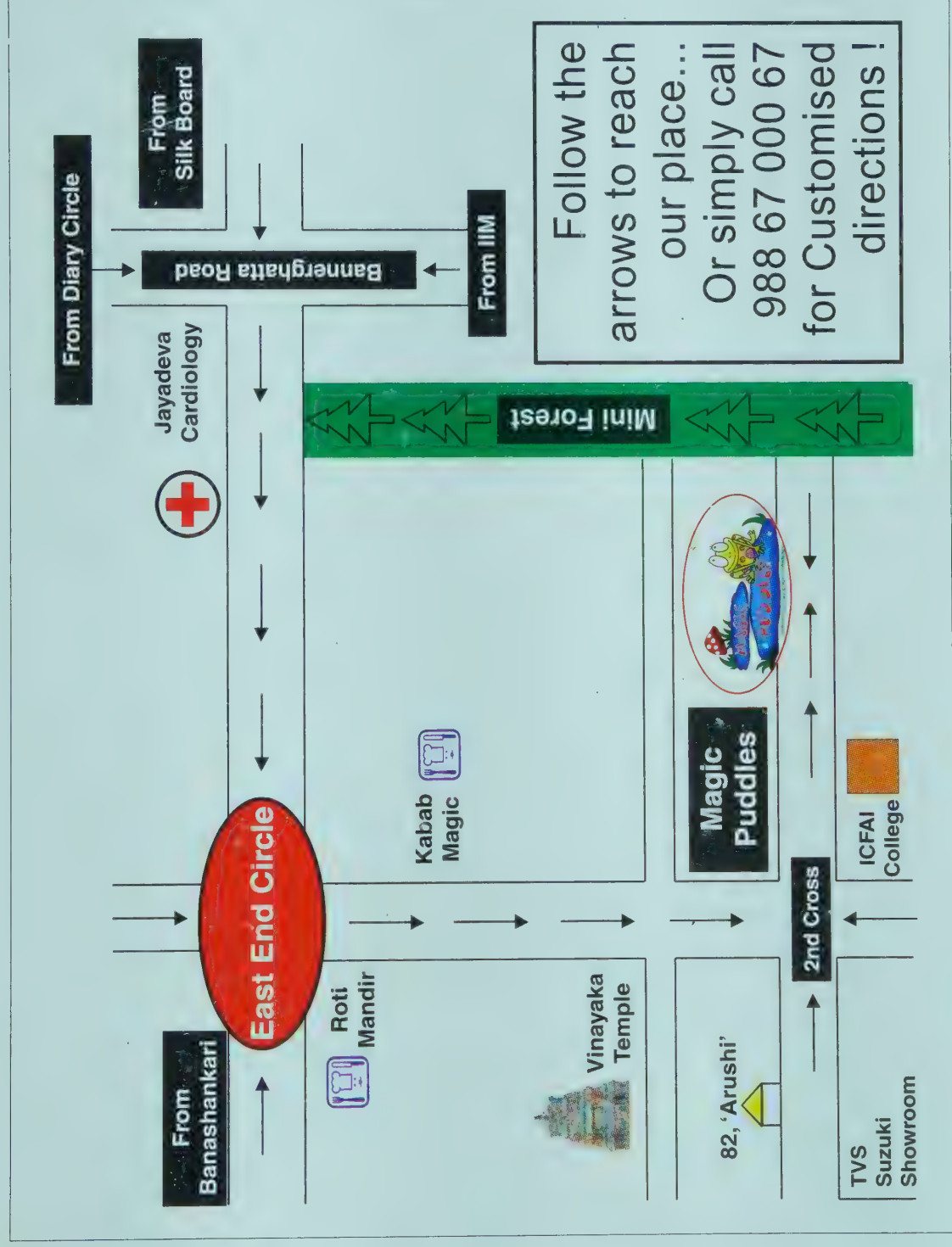
- ❑ Stonehenge is a prehistoric monument located in the English county of Wiltshire, about 8 miles (13 km) north of Salisbury. One of the most famous prehistoric sites in the world, Stonehenge is a "henge monument" meaning that it consists of menhirs (large rocks) in a circular formation
- ❑ Stonehenge was constructed in three phases. It has been estimated that the three phases of the construction required more than thirty million hours of labour.
- ❑ Its original purpose is unclear to us, but some have speculated that it was a temple made for the worship of ancient earth deities. It has been called an astronomical observatory for marking significant events on the prehistoric calendar. Others claim that it was a sacred site for the burial of high-ranking citizens from the societies of long ago.





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